



Puncturing the Devil's Dream About the Hadiths of Najd and Tamim

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It is striking that not one of the great *muhaddiths*, *mufasssirs*, grammarians, historians, or legists of Islam has emerged from the region known as Najd, despite the extraordinary and blessed profusion of such people in other Muslim lands. This essay offers to Muslims with open minds an explanation of this remarkable fact.

The Hadith of Najd: a correction

The land of Najd, which for two centuries has been the crucible of the Wahhabi doctrine, is the subject of a body of interesting hadiths and early narrations, which repay close analysis. Among the best-known of these hadiths is the relation of Imam al-Bukhari in which Hadrat Abdullah ibn Umar said: "The Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) mentioned: '**O Allah, give us baraka in our Syria, O Allah, give us baraka in our Yemen.**' They said: 'And in our Najd?' and he said: '**O Allah, give us baraka in our Syria, O Allah, give us baraka in our Yemen.**' They said: 'And in our Najd?' and I believe that he said the third time: '**In that place are earthquakes, and seditions, and in that place shall rise the devil's horn [qarn al-shaytan].**'"

This hadith is clearly unpalatable to the Najdites themselves, some of whom to this day strive to persuade Muslims from more reputable districts that the hadith does not mean what it clearly says. One device used by such apologists is to utilize a definition that includes Iraq in the frontiers of Najd. By this maneuver, the Najdis draw the conclusion that the part of Najd, which is condemned so strongly in this hadith, is in fact Iraq, and that Najd proper is excluded. Medieval Islamic geographers contest this inherently strange thesis (see for instance Ibn Khurradadhbih, *al-Masalik wa'l-mamalik* [Leiden, 1887], 125; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitab Surat al-ard* [Beirut, 1968], 18); and limit the northern extent of Najd at Wadi al-Rumma, or to the deserts to the south of al-Mada'in. There is no indication that the places, in which the second wave of sedition arose, such as Kufa and Basra, were associated in the mind of the first Muslims with the term *Najd*. On the contrary, these places are in every case identified as lying within the land of Iraq.

The evasion of this early understanding of the term in order to exclude Najd, as usually understood, from the purport of the hadith of Najd, has required considerable ingenuity from pro-Najdi writers in the present day. Some apologists attempt to conflate this hadith with a group of other hadiths which associate the 'devil's horn' with 'the East,' which is supposedly a generic reference to Iraq. While it is true that some late-medieval commentaries also incline to this view, modern geographical knowledge clearly rules it out. Even the briefest glimpse at a modern atlas will show that a straight line drawn to the east of al-Madinah al-Munawwara does not pass anywhere near Iraq, but passes some distance to the south of Riyadh; that is to say, through the exact centre of Najd. The hadiths which speak of 'the East' in this context hence support the view

that Najd is indicated, not Iraq.

On occasion the pro-Najdi apologists also cite the etymological sense of the Arabic word *najd*, which means 'high ground.' Again, a brief consultation of an atlas resolves this matter decisively. With the exception of present-day northern Iraq, which was not considered part of Iraq by any Muslim until the present century (it was called *al-Jazira*), Iraq is notably flat and low-lying, much of it even today being marshland, while the remainder, up to and well to the north of Baghdad, is flat, low desert or agricultural land. Najd, by contrast, is mostly plateau, culminating in peaks such as Jabal Tayyi' (1,300 meters), in the Jabal Shammar range. It is hard to see how the Arabs could have routinely applied a topographic term meaning 'upland' to the flat terrain of southern Iraq (the same territory which proved so suitable for tank warfare during the Gulf War that notorious source of dispute between Riyadh's 'Cavaliers' and 'Roundheads').

Confirmation of this identification is easily located in the hadith literature, which contains numerous references to Najd, all of which clearly denote Central Arabia. To take a few examples out of many dozens: there is the hadith narrated by Imam Abu Dawud (Salat al-Safar, 15), which runs: "We went out to Najd with Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) until we arrived at Dhat al-Riqa', where he met a group from Ghatafan [a Najdite tribe]." In Tirmidhi (Hajj, 57), there is the record of an encounter between the Holy Rasul (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and a Najdi delegation that he received at Arafah (see also Ibn Majah, Manasik, 57). In no such case does the Sunnah indicate that Iraq was somehow included in the Prophetic definition of Najd.

Further evidence can be cited from the cluster of hadiths that identify the *miqat* points for pilgrims. In a hadith narrated by Imam al-Nasa'i (Manasik al-Hajj, 22), Hadrat 'A'isha (radiyallahu 'anha) declared that "Allah's Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) established the *miqat* for the people of Madina at Dhu'l-Hulayfa, for the people of Syria and Egypt at al-Juhfa, for the people of Iraq at Dhat Irq, and for the people of Najd at Qarn, and for the Yemenis at Yalamlam." Imam Muslim (Hajj, 2) narrates a similar hadith: "for the people of Madina it is Dhu'l-Hulayfa—while on the other road it is al-Juhfa—for the people of Iraq it is Dhat Irq, for the people of Najd it is Qarn, and for the people of Yemen it is Yalamlam."

These texts constitute unarguable proof that the Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) distinguished between Najd and Iraq, so much so that he appointed two separate *miqat* points for the inhabitants of each. For him, clearly, Najd did not include Iraq.

Najd in the Hadith Literature

There are many hadiths in which the Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) praised particular lands. It is significant that although Najd is the closest of lands to Makkah and Madina, it is not praised by any one of these hadiths. The first hadith cited above shows the Messenger's willingness to pray for Syria and Yemen, and his insistent refusal to pray for Najd. And wherever Najd is mentioned, it is clearly seen as a problematic territory. Consider, for instance, the following noble hadith:

Amr ibn Abasa said: "Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) was one day reviewing the horses, in the company of Uyayna ibn Hisn ibn Badr al-Fazari. [...] Uyayna remarked: 'The best of men are those who bear their swords on their shoulders, and carry their lances in the woven stocks of their horses, wearing cloaks, and are the people of the Najd.' But Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) replied: ***You lie! Rather, the best of men are the men of the Yemen. Faith is a Yemeni, the Yemen of [the tribes of] Lakhm and Judham and Amila. [...] Hadramawt is better than the tribe of Harith; one tribe is better than another; another is worse [...] My Lord commanded me to curse Quraish, and I cursed them, but he then commanded me to bless them twice, and I did so [...] Aslam and Ghifar, and their associates of Juhaina, are better than Asad and Tamim and Ghatafan and Hawazin, in the sight of Allah on the Day of Rising. [...] The most numerous tribe in the Garden shall be [the Yemeni tribes of] Madhhij and Ma'kul.***" (Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Tabarani, by sound narrators. Cited in Ali ibn Abu Bakr

al-Haythami, *Majma' al-zawa'id wa manba' al-fawa'id* [Cairo, 1352], X, 43).

The Messenger says '**You liel**' to a man who praises Najd. Nowhere does he extol Najd—quite the contrary. But other hadiths in praise of other lands abound. For instance:

Umm Salama narrated that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) gave the following counsel on his deathbed: "**By Allah, I adjure you by Him, concerning the Egyptians, for you shall be victorious over them, and they will be a support for you and helpers in Allah's path.**" (Tabarani, classed by al-Haythami as *sahih* [*Majma'*, X, 63].) (For more on the merit of the Egyptians see *Sahih Muslim*, commentary by Imam al-Nawawi [Cairo, 1347], XVI, 96-7.)

Qays ibn Sa'd narrated that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "**Were faith to be suspended from the Pleiades, men from the sons of Faris [south-central Iran] would reach it.**" (Narrated in the *Musnads* of both Abu Ya'la and al-Bazzar, classified as *Sahih* by al-Haythami. *Majma'*, X, 64-5. See further Nawawi's commentary to *Sahih Muslim*, XVI, 100.)

Allah's Messenger said: "**Tranquillity (sakina) is in the people of the Hijaz.**" (al-Bazzar, cited in Haythami, X, 53.)

On the authority of Abul-Darda (radiyallahu 'anh), the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "**You will find armies. An army in Syria, in Egypt, in Iraq and in the Yemen.**" (Bazzar and Tabarani, classified as *sahih*: al-Haythami, *Majma'*, X, 58.) This constitutes praise for these lands as homes of *jihad* volunteers.

"**The angels of the All-Compassionate spread their wings over Syria.**" (Tabarani, classed as *sahih*: *Majma'*, X, 60. See also Tirmidhi, commentary of Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Mubarakfuri: *Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi bi-sharh Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, X, 454; who confirms it as *hasan sahih*.)

Abu Hurayra narrated that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "**The people of Yemen have come to you. They are tenderer of heart, and more delicate of soul. Faith is a Yemeni, and wisdom is a Yemeni.**" (Tirmidhi, *Fi fadl al-Yaman*, no.4028. Mubarakfuri, X, 435, 437: *hadith hasan sahih*. On page 436 Imam Mubarakfuri points out that the ancestors of the Ansar were from the Yemen.)

"**The people of the Yemen are the best people on earth.**" (Abu Ya'la and Bazzar, classified as *sahih*. Haythami, X, 54-5.)

Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) sent a man to one of the clans of the Arabs, but they insulted and beat him. He came to Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and told him what had occurred. And the Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said, "**Had you gone to the people of Oman, they would not have insulted or beaten you.**" (Muslim, *Fada'il al-Sahaba*, 57. See Nawawi's commentary, XVI, 98: 'this indicates praise for them, and their merit.')

The above hadiths are culled from a substantial corpus of material that records the Holy Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) praising neighboring regions. Again, it is striking that although Najd was closer than any other, hadiths in praise of it are completely absent.

This fact is generally known, although not publicized, by Najdites themselves. It is clear that if there existed a single hadith that names and praises Najd, they would let the Ummah know. In an attempt to circumvent or neutralize the explicit and implicit Prophetic condemnation of their province, some refuse to consider that the territorial hadiths might be in any way worthy of attention, and focus their comments on the tribal groupings who dwell in Najd.

The Tribe of Tamim

The best-known tribe of Central Arabia is the Banu Tamim. There are hadiths that praise virtually all of the major Arab tribal groups, and to indicate the extent of this praise a few examples are listed here:

Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "**O Allah, bless [the tribe of] Ahmas and its horses and its men sevenfold.**" (Ibn Hanbal, in Haythami, *Majma'*, X, 49. According to al-Haythami its narrators are all trustworthy.)

Ghalib b. Abjur said: "I mentioned Qays in the presence of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and he said, **"May Allah show His mercy to Qays."** He was asked, **'O Rasulallah! Are you asking for His mercy for Qays?'** and he replied, **'Yes. He followed the religion of our father Ismail b. Ibrahim, Allah's Friend. Qays! Salute our Yemen! Yemen! Salute our Qays! Qays are Allah's cavalry upon the earth.'**" (Tabarani, declared *sahih* by al-Haythami, X, 49.)

Abu Hurayra narrated that Sayyidina Rasulallah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: **"How excellent a people are Azd, sweet-mouthed, honouring their vows, and pure of heart!"** (Ahmad ibn Hanbal via a good (*hasan*) *isnad*, according to Haythami, X, 49.)

Anas b. Malik said: **"If we are not from Azd, we are not from the human race."** (Tirmidhi, Manaqib, 72; confirmed by Mubarakfuri, X, 439 as *hasan gharib sahih*.)

Abdallah ibn Mas'ud said: "I witnessed Allah's Rasul (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) praying for this clan of Nakh." Or he said: "He praised them until I wished that I was one of them." (Ibn Hanbal, with a sound *isnad*. Haythami, X, 51.)

On the authority of Abdallah ibn Amr ibn al-As, who said: "I heard Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) saying: **'This command [the Caliphate] shall be in Quraish. No one shall oppose them without being cast down on his face by Allah, for as long as they establish the religion.'**" (Bukhari, Manaqib, 2.)

The hadith that appears to praise Tamim is hence not exceptional, and can by no stretch of the imagination be employed to indicate Tamim's superiority over other tribes. In fact, out of this vast literature on the merits of the tribes, only one significant account praises Tamim. This runs as follows: Abu Hurayra said: "I have continued to love Banu Tamim after I heard three things concerning them from Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam). They will be the sternest of my Ummah against the Dajjal; one of them was a captive owned by 'A'isha, and he said: **'Free her, for she is a descendent of Isma'il'**; and when their zakat came, he said: **'This is the zakat of a people,'** or **'of my people.'**" (Bukhari, Maghazi, 68.)

This hadith clearly indicates that the rigor of the Tamimites will be used for, and not against, Islam in the final culminating battle against the Dajjal; and this is unquestionably a merit. The second point is less significant, since all the Arabs are descendents of Nabi Isma'il (alaihis-Salaam); while the variant readings of the third point make it difficult to establish its significance in an unambiguous way. Even the most positive interpretation, however, allows us to conclude no more than that the Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) was pleased with that tribe at the moment it paid its *zakat*. As we shall see, its payment of *zakat* proved to be short-lived.

Far more numerous are the hadiths which explicitly critique the Tamimites. Pro-Najdite apologists usually disregard these hadiths, but traditional Islamic scholarship demands that all, not merely some, of the evidence be mustered and taken as a whole before a verdict can be reached. And a consideration of the abundant critical material on Tamim demonstrates beyond any doubt that this tribe was regarded by the Holy Rasul (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and by the Salaf as deeply problematic.

An early indication of the nature of the Tamimites is given by Allah himself in Surah al-Hujurat. In the fourth ayat of this surah, He (subhanahu wa ta'ala) says: **"Those who call you from behind the chambers: most of them have no sense."** The occasion for revelation (*sabab al-nuzul*) here was as follows:

(blockquote) The "chambers" (*hujurat*) were spaces enclosed by walls. Each of the wives of Allah's Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) had one of them. The ayat was revealed in connection with the delegation of the Banu Tamim who came to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam). They entered the mosque, and approached the chambers of his wives. They stood outside them and called: "Muhammad! Come out to us!" an action that expressed a good deal of harshness, crudeness and disrespect. Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) waited a

while, and then came out to them. One of them, known as al-Aqra' ibn Habis, said: "Muhammad! My praise is an ornament, and my denunciation brings shame!" And the Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) replied: "**Woe betide you! That is the due of Allah.**" (Imam Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Juzayy, *al-Tashil* [Beirut, 1403], p.702. See also the other *tafsir* works; also Ibn Hazm, *Jamharat ansab al-'Arab* [Cairo, 1382], 208, in the chapter on Tamim.)

In addition to this Qur'anic critique, abundant hadiths also furnish the Ummah with advice about this tribe. Since the tacit acceptance of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) constitutes a hadith, we may begin with the following incident.

This relates to a famous poem by Hassan ibn Thabit (rahmatullahi 'alaih). The Tamimites were late converts to Islam, joining the religion, after much resistance, only in the Year of Delegations ('*am al-wufud*), which was the ninth year of the Hijra. They hence miss the virtue of *sabiqah*, of precedence in Islam. Coming at last to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam), the Tamim insisted on a public debate against him, and he appointed Hassan to reply to the Tamimites' vain boasting about their tribe. Hassan's ode, which completely defeated and humiliated them by describing the low status of their tribe, can be considered evidence for the Nabi's (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) own view of Tamim, since the condemnation was given in his presence, and there is no record of his criticizing it. (*Diwan Hassan ibn Thabit* [Beirut, 1966], p.440; for full details of the incident see Barquqi's commentary in the same volume. See also Ibn Hisham, *Sira* [Guillaume translation], p.631.)

A further hadith concerning Tamim runs as follows:

On the authority of Imran ibn Husayn (radiyallahu 'anh): "A group of Tamimites came to the Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam), and he said: '**O tribe of Tamim! Receive good news!**' 'You promise us good news, so give us something [money]!' they replied. And his face changed. Then some Yemenis came, and he said: '**O people of Yemen! Accept good news, even though the tribe of Tamim have not accepted it!**' And they said: 'We accept.' And the Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) began to speak about the beginning of creation, and about the Throne." (Bukhari, *Bad' al-Khalq*, 1.)

The harsh waywardness of the Tamimi mentality documented in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith casts an interesting light on the personality of Abu Jahl, the arch-pagan leader of Quraish. Abu Jahl, with his fanatical hatred of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam), must have been shaped by the Tamimi ethic in his childhood. His mother, Asma' bint Mukharriba, was of the tribe of Tamim. (al-Jumahi, *Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara*, ed. Mahmud Shakir [Cairo, 1952], p.123.) He also married the daughter of 'Umayr ibn Ma'bad al-Tamimi, by whom he had his son, predictably named Tamim. (Mus'ab ibn Abdallah, *Nasab Quraish* [Cairo, 1953], p.312.)

An attribute recurrently ascribed to the Tamimites in the hadith literature is that of misplaced zeal. When they finally enter Islam, they are associated with a fanatical form of piety that demands simple and rigid adherence, rather than understanding; and which frequently defies the established authorities of the religion. Imam Muslim records a narration from Abdallah ibn Shaqiq which runs: "Ibn Abbas once preached to us after the *asr* prayer, until the sun set and the stars appeared, and people began to say: 'The prayer! The prayer!' A man of the Banu Tamim came up to him and said, constantly and insistently: 'The prayer! The prayer!' And Ibn Abbas replied: 'Are you teaching me the *sunnah*, you wretch?'" (Muslim, *Salat al-Musafirin*, 6.)

Banu Tamim and the Khawarij

Perhaps the best known of any hadith about a Tamimite, which again draws our attention to their misplaced zeal, is the hadith of Dhu'l-Khuwaysira:

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (radiyallahu 'anh) said: "We were once in the presence of Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) while he was dividing the spoils of war. Dhu'l-Khuwaysira, a man of the Tamim tribe, came up to him and said: 'Messenger of Allah, be fair!' He replied: '**Woe betide you! Who will be fair if I am not? You are lost and disappointed if I am not fair!**' And Umar

(r.a.) said, 'O Rasulullah! Give me permission to deal with him, so that I can cut off his head!' But he said: ***'Let him be. And he has companions. One of you would despise his prayer in their company, and his fast in their company. They recite the Qur'an but it goes no further than their collarbones. They pass through religion as an arrow passes through its target.'***" Abu Sa'id continued: "I swear that I was present when Ali ibn Abi Talib fought against them. He ordered that that man be sought out, and he was brought to us." (Bukhari, Manaqib, 25. For the 'passing through' see Abu'l-Abbas al-Mubarrad, *al-Kamil*, chapter on 'Akhbar al-Khawarij' published separately by Dar al-Fikr al-Hadith [Beirut, n.d.], pp.23-4: 'usually when this happens none of the target's blood remains upon it'.)

This hadith is taken by the exegetes as a prophecy, and a warning, about the nature of the Kharijites. There is a certain type of believing zealot who goes into religion so hard that he comes out the other side, with little or nothing of it remaining with him. One expert who confirms this is the Hanbali scholar Ibn al-Jawzi, well-known for his hagiographies of Ma'ruf al-Karkhi and Rabi'a al-Adawiya. In his book *Talbis Iblis*. (Beirut, 1403, p.88) under the chapter heading 'A Mention of the Devil's Delusion upon the Kharijites' he narrates the hadith, and then writes:

(blockquote) "This man was called Dhu'l-Khuwaysira al-Tamimi. [...] He was the first Kharijite in Islam. His fault was to be satisfied with his own view; had he paused he would have realized that there is no view superior to that of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam)."

Ibn al-Jawzi goes on to document the development of the Kharijite movement, and the central role played by the tribe of Tamim in it. Hence (p.89)

(blockquote) "The commander of the fight [against the Sunnis, at Harura] was Shabib ibn Rab'i al-Tamimi"; also (p.92) "Amr ibn Bakr al-Tamimi agreed to murder Umar." All this even though their camp sounded like a beehive, so assiduously were they reciting the Holy Qur'an (p.91).

The Kharijite movement proper commenced at the Siffin arbitration, when the first dissenters left the army of the Hadrat Khalifa Ali (karramallahu ta'ala wajhahu). One of them was Abu Bilal Mirdas, a member of the tribe of Tamim (Ibn Hazm, 223), who despite his constant worship and recitation of the Holy Qur'an became one of the most brutal of the Kharijite zealots. He is remembered as the first who said the *Tahkim*—the formula 'The judgment is Allah's alone'—on the Day of Siffin, which became the slogan of the later Kharijite *da'wah*.

In his long analysis of the Kharijite movement, Imam Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi also describes the intimate involvement of Tamimites, and of Central Arabians generally, noting that the tribes of Yemen and Hijaz contributed hardly anyone to the Kharijite forces. He gives an account of Dhu'l-Khuwaysira's later Kharijite activities. Appearing before Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (karramallahu wajhahu) he says: "Ibn Abi Talib! I am only fighting you for the sake of Allah and the Hereafter!" to which Imam Ali replies: "Nay, you are like those of whom Allah says, ***'Shall I inform you who are the ones whose works are most in loss? It is they whose efforts are astray in the life of this world, but who think that they are doing good!'***" [Kahf, 103]. (Imam Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi, *al-Farq bayn al-firaq* [Cairo, n.d.], 80; see the note to p.76 for the full identification of Dhu'l-Khuwaysira.)

As Imam Abd al-Qahir gives his account of the early Kharijite rebellions, replete with appalling massacres of innocent Muslim civilians, he makes it clear that the leaders of each of the significant Kharijite movements hailed from Najd. For instance, the Azariqa, one of the most vicious and widespread Khariji movements, were led by Nafi' ibn al-Azraq, who was from the Central Arabian tribe of Banu Hanifa (Abd al-Qahir, 82). As the Imam records, "Nafi and his followers considered the territory of those who opposed them to be Dar al-Kufr, in which one could slaughter their women and children. [...] They used to say: 'Our opponents are *mushriks*, and hence we are not obliged to return anything we hold in trust to them.'" (Abd al-Qahir, 84.) After his death in battle, "the Azariqa pledged their allegiance to Ubaydallah ibn Ma'mun al-Tamimi. Al-Muhallab then fought them at Ahwaz, where Ubaidallah ibn Ma'mun himself died,

along with his brother Uthman ibn Ma'mun and three hundred of the most fanatical of the Azariqa. The remainder retreated to Ayda, where they pledged their allegiance to Qatari ibn al-Fuja'a, whom they called Amir al-Mu'minin." (Abd al-Qahir, 85-6.) The commentator to Abd al-Qahir's text reminds us that Ibn Fuja'a was also of Tamim (p.86).

The Azariqa, who massacred countless tens of thousands of Muslims who refused to accept their views, had a rival in the Najdiyya faction of the Kharijites. These were named after Najda ibn Amir, a member of the tribe of Hanifa whose homeland is **Najd**; Najda himself maintained his army in Yamama, which is part of Najd. (Abd al-Qahir, 87.)

As is the way with Kharijism in all ages, the Najdiyya fragmented amid heated arguments generated by their intolerance of any dissent. The causes of this schism included the Kharijite attack on Madina, which came away with many captives; and different Kharijite *ijtihads* over sexual relations with Muslim women who, not being Kharijites, they had enslaved. Three major factions emerged from this split, the most dangerous of which was led by Atiyya ibn al-Aswad, again of the tribe of Hanifa. Following Najda's death, his own faction split, again into three, one of which left Najd to raid the vicinity of Basra (Abd al-Qahir, 90-1).

The last major Kharijite sect was the 'Ibadiyya, which, in a gentler and much attenuated form, retains a presence even today in Zanzibar, southern Algeria, and Oman. The movement was founded by Abdallah ibn Ibad, another Tamimi. Its best-known doctrine is that non-Ibadis are *kuffar*: they are not *mu'mins*, but they are not *mushriks* either. "They forbid secret assassinations [of non-Ibadis], but allow open battles. They allow marriages [with non-Ibadis], and inheritance from them. They claim that all this is to aid them in their war for Allah and His Messenger." (Abd al-Qahir, 103.)

The best-known woman among the Kharijites was Qutam bint 'Alqama, a member of the Tamimite tribe. She is remembered as the one who told her bridegroom, Ibn Muljam that "I will only accept you as my husband at a dowry which I myself must name, which is three thousand dirhams, a male and a female slave, and the murder of Ali!" He asked, "You shall have all that, but how may I accomplish it?" and she replied, "Take him by surprise. If you escape, you will have rescued the people from evil, and will live with your wife; while if you die in the attempt, you will go on to the Garden and a delight that shall never end!" (Mubarrad, 27.) As is generally known, Ibn Muljam (la'natullahi alaihi) was executed after he stabbed imam Ali (karramallahu wajhahu) to death outside the mosque in Kufa.

Muslims anxious not to repeat the tragic errors of the past will wish to reflect deeply upon this pattern of events. Tens of thousands of Muslims, fervently committed to the faith and outstanding for their practical piety, nonetheless fell prey to the Kharijite temptation. The Ulama trace the origins of that temptation back to the incident of Dhu'l-Khuwaysira [may curses be upon him], who considered himself a better Muslim than the Holy Nabi himself (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam). And he, like the overwhelming majority of the Kharijite leaders who followed in his footsteps, was a Tamimi. Of the non-Tamimi Kharijites, almost all were from **Najd**.

The Ridda: the First Fitna

There is a further issue that Muslims will wish to consider when forming their view of Najd. This is the attitude of the Najdis following the death of the Holy Messenger (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam). The historians affirm that the great majority of the rebellions against the payment of *zakat* which broke out during the *khilafa* of Hadrat Abu Bakr (radiyallahu 'anh) took place among Najdis. Moreover, and even more significantly, many of the Najdi rebellions were grounded in a strange anti-Islamic ideology. The best-known of these was led by Musaylima, who claimed to be a prophet, and who established a rival *shari'a* which included quasi-Muslim rituals such as forms of fasting and dietary rules. He also prescribed prayers three times a day. As leader of a rival religion, he and his Najdi enthusiasts were in a state of *baghy*, heretical revolt against due caliphal authority, and Hadrat Abu Bakr (Radiyallahu 'anh) sent an army against them under

Khalid ibn al-Walid. In the year 12 of the Hijra Khalid defeated the Najdis at the Battle of al-Aqraba, a bloody clash that centered on a walled garden that is known to our historians as the Garden of Death, because many great Companions lost their lives there at the hands of the Najdis. (See Abdallah ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba, *Kitab al-Ma'arif* [Cairo, 1960], p.206; Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-buldan* [repr. Beirut, n.d., 86.] An indication of the continuity of Najdi religious life is given by the non-Muslim traveller Palgrave, who as late as 1862 found that some Najdi tribesmen continued to revere Musaylima as a prophet. (W. Palgrave, *Narrative of a year's journey through Central and Eastern Arabia* [London, 1865], I, 382.)

The other ringleader of Najdi rebellion against the *khilafa* was a woman known as Sajah, whose full name was **Umm Sadir bint Aws**, and who belonged to the tribe of Tamim. She made claims to prophethood in the name of a *rabb* who was 'in the clouds,' and who gave her revelations by which she succeeded in uniting sections of the Tamim who had argued among themselves over the extent to which they should reject the authority of Madina. Leading several campaigns against tribes who remained loyal to Islam, the Najdi prophetess is said to have thrown in her lot with Musaylima. Other than this, little is known of her fate. (Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'arif*, p.405; Baladhuri, *Futuh*, pp.99-100.)

Recent Najdi Tendencies

It is well known that the Najdi reformer, **Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab**, was a Tamimi [who descends directly from Dhu'l-Khuwaysira]. The violence and *takfir* associated with the movement that carries his name surely bears more than a coincidental resemblance to the policies and mindset of the Tamimi Kharijites of ancient Najd. Consider, for instance, the following massacre, of the Shi'ah (and Muslims) of Karbala in April 1801, as described by a Wahhabi historian:

(blockquote) Sa'ud made for Karbala with his victorious army, famous pedigree horses, and all the settled people and bedouin of Najd [...] The Muslims (i.e., the Wahhabis) surrounded Karbala and took it by storm. They killed most of the people in the markets and houses. One cannot count their spoils. They stayed there for just one morning, and left after midday, taking away all the possessions. Nearly two thousand people were killed in Karbala. (Uthman ibn Bishr, *Unwan al-Majd fi Tarikh Najd*, Makka, 1349), 1, 121-122.)

It is hard to distinguish this raid, and the brutality of its accomplishment, from the Kharijite raids from Najd into the same region a thousand years earlier.

Muhammad Finati, an Italian convert to Islam who served in the army of the Khalifa that defeated the Wahhabis, wrote a long first-hand account of the extreme barbarism of the Najdi hordes. For instance:

(blockquote) Such among us as fell alive into the hands of these cruel fanatics, were wantonly mutilated by the cutting off of their arms and legs, and left to perish in that state, some of whom, in the course of our retreat, I myself actually saw, who had no greater favor to ask than that we would put them to death. (G. Finati, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Giovanni Finati*, London, 1830, I, 287).

It is sometimes claimed that the days when 'all the settled people and bedouin of Najd' would happily commit such mass murder are long gone, and that Wahhabism has become more moderate. But another, more recent example, shows otherwise. In 1924, the Wahhabi army entered the city of Ta'if, **plundering it for three days**. The chief qadi and the Ulama were dragged from their houses and slaughtered, while several hundred other civilians lost their lives. (Ibn Hizlul, *Tarikh Muluk Al Sa'ud* [Riyadh, 1961], pp.151-3.) After giving the Sunni population of the Hijaz this terrorist lesson, 'Ibn Sa'ud occupied Mecca with Britain's tacit blessing.' (Alexei Vassiliev, *A History of Saudi Arabia* [London, 1998], p.264).

CONCLUSION

A good deal of material concerning Najd and Tamim has been preserved from the time of the Salaf. If we reject the method of some Najdi apologists, a method based on the highly selective

quotation of hadiths coupled with the blind imitation of opinions expressed by late-medieval commentary writers, we may reach some reasonably settled and authoritative conclusions regarding Central Arabia and its people. The Holy Qur'an, the sound Hadith, and the experience of the Salaf overwhelmingly concur that Central Arabia is a region of *fitna*. The first of all *fitnas* in Islam emerged from that place, notably the arrogance of Dhu'l-Khuwaysira and his like, and also the apostasy and fondness for false prophets which caused such difficulty for Hadrat Abu Bakr (radiyallahu 'anh). Subsequently, the Kharijite heresy, overwhelmingly Najdi in its roots, cast a long shadow over the early history of Islam, dividing the Muslims, distracting their armies from the task of conquering Byzantium, and injecting rancor, suspicion, and bitterness among the very earliest generations of Muslims. Only the most determined, blinkered and irresponsible Najdi sympathizer could ignore this evidence, transmitted so reliably from the pure Salaf, and persist in the delusion that Najd and the misguided, literalistic rigorism which it recurrently produces, is somehow an area favored by Allah.

And Allah knows best. May He unite the Ummah through love for the early Muslims who refused bigotry, and may He preserve us from the trap of Kharijism and those who are attracted to its mindset in our time. Amin.

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